

RAS AL KHAIMAH BREAKS RECORD WITH 1.22 MILLION TOURISTS IN 2023



Representing an 8% increase versus 2022 and a significant 24% hike in international arrivals, Ras Al Khaimah's performance is underpinned by several milestones, from becoming the first destination in the Middle East to achieve EarthCheck's Silver Certification to boosting air connectivity and staging headline-grabbing events.

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Ras Al Khaimah, UAE, 8 January 2024: Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) reports its best year for tourism ever, welcoming a record 1.22 million overnight arrivals to the nature Emirate in 2023, up 8% on 2022 numbers and bolstered by a significant 24% year-on-year pick-up in international visitors.

The robust performance is underscored by RAKTDA's strategic growth plans. From investment in tourism infrastructure, targeted initiatives to drive more visitors to the emirate, to developing an ecosystem rooted in sustainability, Ras Al Khaimah continues to reinforce its position as a destination of the future. Its key 2023 achievements include:

- A 24% increase in international visitors, supported by over 2,200 international activities from roadshows, trade fairs to media events across 30 countries.
- Cemented status as a business and social events hub with a 23% growth in MICE revenue and 103% increase in revenue from weddings.
- Silver Certification under EarthCheck's world-leading Sustainable Destinations programme – the only destination in the Middle East to receive this level of certification alongside more than 20 tourism partners from hotels and attractions.



- Featured in [CNN Travel](#)'s best destinations to visit in 2023; [Condé Nast Traveler](#)'s best places to go in Asia 2024; [Travel + Leisure India](#)'s Forget Dubai and Abu Dhabi, Ras Al Khaimah Is The Place To Be In The UAE; and [Forbes](#)' Why You Should Visit Ras Al Khaimah Now.
- Boosted international air connectivity with the introduction of direct flights with Qatar Airways, Indian carrier IndiGo's, Smart Wings, Centrum Air and SmartLynx.
- Launched borderless travel with Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) for cross-destination tourism promotion and marketing initiatives, boosting visitor arrivals to Ras Al Khaimah and Musandam.
- Debut of Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort with the start of 2024 and the reopening of Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah following an extensive refurbishment.
- Staged multiple headline-grabbing events, including the 2023 WMF Minifootball World Cup, DP World Tour, RAK Half Marathon, Arab Aviation Summit, Exotic Wedding Planning Conference and the Global Citizen Forum.
- Set two new Guinness World Record titles and attracted over 65,000 visitors at its 2024 New Year's Eve fireworks and drone display.
- RAKTDA was certified as a Great Place to Work® for the third consecutive year and ranked 4th in Best Workplaces in the Public Sector for the GCC in 2023.

Commenting on Ras Al Khaimah's record-breaking 2023, **Raki Phillips, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority**, said: "It has been a great year for our Emirate, one that clearly set the groundwork for sustainable growth and development in Ras Al Khaimah." He further added, "Despite global challenges that have impacted our industry, we remained agile and resilient as a tourism community, working together to deliver a destination offering that would resonate with our visitors and residents alike. From investing in infrastructure and staging world-class events to making our Emirate sustainable and accessible to all, Ras Al Khaimah is firmly on the path for continued success in 2024 and beyond."

Delivering more visitors to Ras Al Khaimah

RAKTDA's efforts to promote the Emirate to an even broader global audience paid dividends in 2023, delivering a 8% increase in total annual visitors to reach the 1.22 million milestone, supported by 24% boost in international visitors. Complementing this growth, hotel occupancy rate in the Emirate also saw a significant rise, with an impressive occupancy of 74%, marking a year-on-year growth of 12 percentage points.

With Ras Al Khaimah sharing its border with the Sultanate of Oman, RAKTDA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) to pursue cross-destination



tourism activities to benefit both destinations. The first-of-its-kind strategic partnership aims to position Ras Al Khaimah and Oman's Musandam region as leading global tourism destinations in the Middle East, creating opportunities for travellers to visit both in a single trip.

Connecting the world to the Emirate

Increasing airlift into Ras Al Khaimah is crucial to achieving tourism arrivals goals and on November 1st 2023, the new Qatar Airways daily service to Ras Al Khaimah International Airport opened up the Emirate to a network of 160-plus destinations globally via the airline's Doha hub.

With India, a major tourism source market for Ras Al Khaimah, particularly for leisure, incentives and weddings, IndiGo's introduction of a direct service from Hyderabad, adding to its direct Mumbai flight, helped accelerate arrivals growth. Moving from air to sea connectivity, Ras Al Khaimah welcomed six calls by four luxury cruise liners in H1 and will receive 14 luxury cruise calls this 2023/2024 season, growing to 20 by 2025/2026 and 50 by 2030/2031, bringing in cruise passengers that will further increase arrivals figures.

Responsible tourism development

In 2023, the Emirate achieved Silver Certification under EarthCheck's Sustainable Destinations program – a first in the Middle East. EarthCheck's rigorous process involves monitoring and auditing across 10 sustainability indicators – from energy and water consumption to waste management, carbon footprint analysis and community engagement. Bolstering this initiative, RAKTDA launched its own sustainability certification programme for tourism businesses, Responsible RAK, with more than 20 hotels, attractions and tour operators having earned Responsible RAK Silver Certification to date.

The Emirate outperformed the baseline average in three significant areas, reporting a performance that was better by 23% in energy consumption with savings of 12.4 gigajoules since 2021, 29% in greenhouse gas emissions equating to a saving of 1.8 million tonnes of CO₂, and 61% in waste output, leading to savings of 420 million litres since 2021.

More rooms drive visitor growth

Ras Al Khaimah's fast-growing hotel portfolio is central to delivering more arrivals to the Emirate. In 2023, several new hospitality projects were announced including Nobu, Le Méridien, W Hotels, JW Marriott & Hilton on Al Marjan Island in addition to Nikki Beach on Mina Al Arab, representing over 1,800 keys in total. The destination also welcomed Anantara Mina Al Arab Ras Al Khaimah Resort, which fully opened its doors on 2nd January 2024 with 174 rooms, suites and villas, including the emirate's first overwater villas. Additionally, the iconic Waldorf Astoria Ras Al Khaimah reopened following an extensive refurbishment, revealing revamped rooms and suites, new



culinary experiences and a reimagined wellness and events spaces. Other upcoming hotel projects including Westin Resort (257 keys), Sofitel Al Hamra (292 keys), Rove Al Marjan Island (441 keys), Rotana Mangrove (258 keys) and Saij, A Mantis Collection Mountain Lodge (70 keys) are all set to open in the near future (2024/2025). Design details of the new USD \$3.9 billion Wynn Al Marjan Island were also revealed, with the 1,500-key mega resort inspired by the seascape of Al Marjan's four islands. The integrated resort will feature shopping, a gaming area, a state-of-the-art events centre, wellness and spa facilities, 24 dining and lounge experiences and extensive entertainment choices.

A fast-growing events hub and record breaker

Ras Al Khaimah continues to cement its status as a global hub for business and social events, and in 2023, witnessed 23% growth in MICE revenue and 103% increase in revenue from weddings. The Emirate also hosted several headline-grabbers including Arab Aviation Summit, Exotic Wedding Planning Conference (EWPC) and the Global Citizen Forum, DP World Tour, and the RAK Half Marathon. Its reputation as a leading sports events destination was boosted too when the 2023 WMF Minifootball World Cup kicked off in November, marking the tournament's Middle East debut and attracting 32 national teams and 30,000-plus spectators.

Ras Al Khaimah also gained notoriety with its record-breaking 2024 New Year's Eve extravaganza. An eight-minute-long firework and drone display set two new GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS™ titles in a stunning spectacle that lit up the skies along 4.5km stretch of Ras Al Khaimah's waterfront. The show made history, gaining titles for the '*Longest chain of aquatic floating fireworks*' for a grand total of 5.8km and the '*Longest straight-line drones display*' for a total length of 2km.

To find out more about Ras Al Khaimah's destination offering, please visit visitrasalkhaimah.com and check out the Emirate's social platforms [Instagram](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#).

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Notes to Editors:

[About Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority \(RAKTDA\)](#)

The Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (RAKTDA) was established in May 2011 under the government of Ras Al Khaimah. RAKTDA aims to develop the Emirate's tourism infrastructure and establish Ras Al Khaimah as a world-class destination for leisure and business travel, creating sustainable investment opportunities and



enhancing the quality of life for its residents. In order to achieve its goals, the Authority has a government mandate to license, regulate and monitor the Emirate's tourism and hospitality industry.

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For any media enquiries, please contact:

ASDA'A BCW

+971 (4) 4507600

RAK@bcw-global.com

Gehan Sidky

+971 (7) 204 4060

news@raktda.com

Waseem Dahhan

+971 (7) 204 4059

news@raktda.com